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THE

“Ministerial Appeal,”

A VALEDICTORY SERMON,

DELIVERED IN

The Evangelic Lutheran Church,

IN

HAGERS-TOWN, MD.

ON SUNDAY THE 4TH OF SEPTEMBER, 1831.

BY B. KURTZ.

PRINTED AT THE “FREE PRESS” OFFICE.

HAGERS-TOWN, SEPTEMBER 5, 1831.

REVEREND & DEAR SIR :

Feeling a deep interest in the welfare of the congregation over which you have so long and affectionately presided as Pastor, and believing that the many and important admonitions contained in the Valedictory you yesterday delivered, are well calculated to promote its welfare, and to keep alive that spirit of prayer and watchfulness so often insisted upon by you, and now in the absence of a Shepherd, so particularly necessary ; we as a Committee appointed by the Church Council for that purpose, would respectfully ask the favor of a copy of the Sermon for publication.

Very affectionately yours, &c.

GEORGE SHRYOCK,
FREDERICK STOVER, } Committee.
JACOB KAUSLER,

REV. B. KURTZ.

HAGERS-TOWN, September 5, 1831.

BELoved BRETHREN :

As the CHURCH COUNCIL are of opinion that the Sermon I yesterday delivered, is of sufficient importance to entitle it to publication, and therefore wish a copy of it for that purpose ; I feel no hesitation in yielding to your request, and herewith send you the Manuscript.—With the most sincere prayers for your happiness individually, and that of the COUNCIL, and the CONGREGATION generally, I remain in the best bonds,

Yours, &c.

B. KURTZ.

MESSRS. GEORGE SHRYOCK,
FREDERICK STOVER,
JACOB KAUSLER.

Sermon.

ACTS 20. 17—21. *And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house; testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

TO us, the present is an affecting and trying occasion. We are about to retire from the connexion which has so long subsisted between us, and to take our final leave of you. The cords that have bound us together as pastor and people are to be severed—the relation which we have reciprocally sustained, and which a sixteen years duration has so closely cemented, and rendered so tender, so cordial, and so interesting, is to be dissolved, and we are mutually to enter into entirely new engagements.

Such a separation cannot fail to produce strong feelings, particularly under the very friendly circumstances in which it occurs in the present instance. Respect for your opinion therefore, no less than justice to ourselves, demands that we should explicitly exhibit the grounds upon which we have felt ourselves justifiable in terminating our past union.

If we know and may trust ourselves, we can safely declare, that selfish considerations have not actuated us. Neither worldly gain, nor worldly ease, nor self-aggrandizement has been our motive. Neither disaffection toward individuals, or particular families, or the congregation at large, nor dissatisfaction with any treatment we have received in reference to our person or the compensation allowed us for our services, lies at the foundation of our contemplated removal; nor has the prospect of increased comforts, or of diminished labors, and much less, the mere love of novelty begotten in us, the resolution to change our sphere of ministerial exertion.

Whence then has arisen the determination to leave a neighborhood endeared to us by so many tender reminiscences and affectionate associations, and to bid adieu to a people whose numerous kindnesses, tried friendship, long continued support, and warm and unimpaired attachment have laid us under so many obligations and assigned to *them* so elevated a place in our esteem and affection? From no other source has this purpose proceeded than *a deep sense of duty.*

Our own feelings no less than your wishes, would have led us to remain among you; but the MASTER has plainly intimated that he has a work elsewhere for us to perform, and when we believe that he calls, we must not—we dare not hesitate to obey. It would be a tedious task to set before you the whole train of circumstances from which we have inferred it to be our peremptory duty to yield to the oft repeated and urgent call of our brethren in *Chambersburgh*. Suffice it to say, that they were such as forced the conviction upon our mind, that we were bound to transfer our pastoral labors to another field of the great vineyard of our Lord. In a word, we made the subject of our approaching removal, exclusively a question of conscience, and after the most deliberate and unbiassed reflection, and the most fervent and persevering prayer, we were led to the

conclusion that we must depart, or subject ourselves to the charge of pouring contempt upon the manifest indications of an all governing Providence.

We have selected as the subject matter of our valediction, part of that pathetic farewell discourse which St Paul delivered to the Elders or Presbyters of *Ephesus*. Not having time to call at that city, he thought it best to have a general convocation of the heads of that church to meet him at *Miletus*, (about thirty six miles distant) that he might communicate to them the instructions mentioned in the succeeding part of his address.

In the further prosecution of our subject, we shall direct your attention to,

I. *The Apostle's appeal to the Elders of Ephesus in taking a last farewell of them at Miletus.*

II. *The motives with which he made that appeal.*

May the Lord fill this house with his presence, and our hearts with his grace!

I. *The Apostle's appeal to the Elders of Ephesus, &c.*

This zealous and distinguished man of God had labored three years among the Elders of Ephesus, so that they had abundant opportunities during that time to obtain a full knowledge not only of his general character, but even of the exercises of his heart. Hence he could with propriety refer to their own knowledge of him. *Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia after what manner I have been with you at all seasons.*

Accordingly he appealed to them respecting,

A. *His dispositions as a christian—*

As a christian he had served God with all humility of mind. Anxious not only to save his own soul, but also to exhibit in his life an "example to the flock," he considered it a matter of high importance to serve the Lord, and him only. And this he did with all humility of mind, i. e. in all instances of condescension and self-abasement. Though he could truly boast that in point of learning, suffering and successful labor, 2 Cor. 11. 5. "he was not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles," yet his pre-eminence never inflated him with pride and self-consequence; but like his Master, he continued "meek and lowly in heart," conversing freely and familiarly with the poorest and weakest as well as with the most opulent and influential, ever willing to stoop to any service in order to advance their happiness.

With this humility of mind, he blended compassion for their souls. He had also served the Lord with many tears. Some of his hearers like many of ours had no doubt rejected the gospel, while others who professed to believe in it, walked unworthy of it; and here was cause enough for such a man as he, to weep on their account. In his addresses to them therefore, as well as in his supplications in their behalf, his tender heart overflowed with sympathy, while his eyes were suffused with tears; mourning with them that mourned and mingling his tears with theirs on every occasion, he manifested his deep and affectionate concern for their prosperity.

Moreover, he had persevered in his efforts for their salvation, notwithstanding the difficulties he had met with. Many temptations had befallen him by the lying in wait of the Jews. Indeed, no man perhaps ever had his faith and courage so severely tested as St. Paul. Speaking of himself, he says: 2 Cor. 11. 23. "In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prison more frequent, in deaths oft." Yet in defiance of all dangers and opposition he continued for three long and painful years, to prosecute the work of the ministry among them.

In the next place he appealed to them respecting,

B. His labors as a pastor—

He had certainly been a faithful pastor, for *he had kept back nothing that was profitable unto them, but had shewn them and taught them publicly and from house to house.*

He had kept back nothing that was profitable. Notwithstanding the dangers to which he was exposed, and the temptation he must have had to suppress those truths that were not acceptable to the unrenewed nature of man; or to the particular prejudices of the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*, he fully and faithfully declared *the whole counsel of God*, or the whole doctrine of Christ crucified;—of all that God had revealed concerning the salvation of man, he would not suppress one word that was calculated to be profitable to them.

He shewed them and taught them. He did not amuse them with abstruse speculations nor lead them into, and then lose them in a labyrinth of lofty notions and pompous expressions, but *shewed* them,—plainly unfolded to them the simple and sublime truths of the gospel, and *taught* them with a perspicuity that enabled them to understand.

This he did *publicly and from house to house.* He did not limit himself to a chosen few in secret, when he had an opportunity of preaching to the great congregation, nor did he confine himself to the congregation, when there was occasion for private and personal instructions; nor did he think it too laborious or troublesome to go from house to house, and even from individual, to individual to seek those that were weak and had wandered. “Behold here,” says the pious and judicious Calmet, “the model of a good shepherd—full of doctrine and zeal: he communicates with profusion, and yet discretion, without jealousy and without fear, what God had put in his heart, and what charity inspires.”

Finally, the Apostle’s appeal also had respect to,

C. His doctrines as a preacher—

He had testified both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

He had testified, i. e. he had preached as one upon oath, that was himself fully assured of the truth of what he preached. As a conscientious witness gives in his evidence at the bar, with the utmost seriousness and concern, so he testified in relation to the doctrines of the gospel.

The particular doctrines concerning which he chiefly testified or preached, were *repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.* He did not present to his hearers philosophical disquisitions, or matters of metaphysical and doubtful disputation; nor did he attempt to feed their starving souls with mere moral essays, clothed in fustian, and set off with bombastick tropes and frothy metaphors. But he urged upon them the fundamental doctrines of *repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Repentance here imports sorrow for sin, or deep and heartfelt humiliation before God, for the violation of his law. This is indispensable in order to obtain mercy; for our Lord declares: “Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish,” *Luke* 13. 3., and the Apostle adds: “God commandeth all men every where to repent.” *Acts* 17. 30. But necessary as repentance is for every one, it is not sufficient for salvation, because it cannot atone for sin. If our eyes were fountains of tears and we could weep day and night, we could not thereby obliterate one single offence we have committed, or render satisfaction for the most trifling aberration from the path of duty. *Repentance* is therefore of no avail whatever, unless *faith* accompany it. Hence the Apostle yet further insisted on *faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Faith, when thus used in connexion with *repentance* implies an exclusive and confident reliance on Christ as our Mediator and Redeemer, for pardon and eternal life. By *repentance* we confess and abandon sin, but by *faith* we trust in the merits of our crucified Lord for mercy and salvation; by *repentance* we learn to detest sin and to fly from it as from a hideous monster or a deadly poison, but by *faith* we renounce all dependence upon ourselves and confide in the blood and righteousness of the Son of God for remission of sin, and acceptance with the Father. This *repentance* and *faith* were equally necessary to the salvation both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, for all had sinned and fallen short of God's glory, and hence the Apostle pressed these duties alike upon both.

Such a minister was St. Paul, and such they all knew him to have been, and hence he could boldly and confidently appeal to them on the several points just noticed.

Beloved brethren, may we not on the present occasion make a somewhat similar appeal to you? We indeed presume not to place ourselves upon a level with the holy Apostle; we are deeply sensible of our utter unworthiness of a comparison with him, and have a feeling conviction of our numerous infirmities; but may we not, without exposing ourselves to the imputation of pretending to such a competition, humbly appeal to you as regards our *sincerity, diligence and soundness of doctrine*? *Ye know from the first day that we came into Hagerstown, after what manner we have been with you at all seasons.* You have seen us in all the various relations of life, and witnessed our manner and behaviour in the several departments of our profession—as *christian*—as *pastor*—as *preacher*. And cannot you who are best acquainted with us, bear testimony to a uniformity of disposition to *serve the Lord*? Have you not found us always ready to condescend to any duty for the sake of your souls? have we not served the poorest and weakest in the congregation when there could have been no prospect of compensation, with as much alacrity as the wealthiest and most influential? has not our heart often filled up with intense and compassionate anxiety for your salvation and for that of your beloved children, while, our eyes bathed in tears, have borne witness to our sincerity? and have we not persevered in the face of more opposition and amidst severer trials than could have been endured by flesh and blood if God had not supported us?—You know what dangers have befallen us by the lying in wait, not of the *Jews*, but of unbelievers and scoffers of a different character; you know what unkind treatment we have met with, not so much from the members of the congregation, as from other and foreign sources,—what calumnies have assailed us, what troubles have invaded our peace, how our purest motives have sometimes been misrepresented, our most innocent remarks misconstrued and our best actions perverted;—you know what cruel censures have been recklessly hurled against us, and what acrimony and malevolence have characterized the persecutions of some of our enemies. But did they succeed in driving us from the post of duty? have we not for the space of sixteen years, (during which frequent opportunities to accept of other stations presented themselves) persevered in our efforts for your good? Thanks be to God for the wonderful support he has vouchsafed to us in the midst of afflictions, which, without his divine presence, would have been too heavy for flesh and blood to sustain!

In reference to our labors as a *pastor*, we confidently appeal, whether *we have kept back* any one truth of the gospel that might have been profitable to you? have we not declared to you the whole counsel of God, and that too with all the simplicity and plainness of which we were capable?—

uniting doctrines, duties and christian experience, urging you at one time, by the precious promises, and at another, by the awful denunciations of God's word,—warning sinners, comforting mourners, encouraging believers, and endeavoring to restore backsliders to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls? Can any one of you say, that a desire either to court your favor or to escape your displeasure, ever once led us to suppress the truth, or keep back reproof when it was necessary? Moreover, have we not visited you in your houses, prayed with you in your families, conversed with you in private on the great interests of your future destiny, and endeavored to stimulate you by personal exhortation to a faithful discharge of religious duty? Have not your dear children, your beloved sons and daughters, lien near to our heart, and participated largely in our pastoral labors; and that too, to the conversion of many of them from sin to the Lord Jesus Christ, so that they are now, not only the present hope of the Church, but also the joy of your hearts and the pride of your families? Are not a large majority of your congregation, consisting mostly of young people, *our own dear nurslings*,—*our own* beloved little band of brothers and sisters in Christ whom *we* have instructed, confirmed and admitted to their first participation in the Holy Supper? has not the grace of God made many of them “the seals of our Apostleship in the Lord,” so that we can say in relation to them, as did the Apostle with respect to the Thessalonians: 1 *Thess.* 2. 19. “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” and may we not hope that the Lord of Hosts will claim them as *Mat.* 2. 17. “his in that day when he shall make up his jewels,” and that we may be permitted to take them by the hand and lead them forward one by one to their Fathers and their Brothers throne, and present them there as the trophies of redeeming blood, saying: *Here am I and they whom thou hast given me?*

As regards the principles we have proclaimed, we feel still greater confidence in making our appeal. Have not the two most prominent and essential doctrines of christianity, *repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*, constituted the theme of our public and private ministrations? have we not a thousand times taught you and proven to you from scripture and observation, that you are all grievous sinners in the sight of God both by nature and by practice, and as such, under the curse of the law and exposed to the eternal wrath of Jehovah? have we not therefore called upon you and entreated you on every occasion to repent,—to loathe and abhor yourselves before God in the dust of humiliation and contrition and beseech him for pardoning and saving grace? have we not at the same time shown you the utter insufficiency of your tears to wipe away your guilt, and of moral amendment to expiate your past offences, and therefore directed you to look with the eyes of faith to Christ as the only one whose merits can atone, whose blood can cleanse, whose righteousness can justify, whose spirit can sanctify and whose vicarious sacrifice can accomplish a complete reconciliation between your souls and your God? have we not testified to you in the most solemn manner, and over and over again that this is the only way of salvation for you all, whether moral or immoral, whether self righteous pharisees or philosophising and contemptuous infidels, and whether you move in the more distinguished circles of life, or belong to the less refined orders of society; and that unless you renounce all reliance upon every thing you have done or can do, and with broken hearts and contrite spirits, trust exclusively in the blood and righteousness of the Son of God, it will be impossible for you to escape the punishment due to your iniquities, and much less enter into the

kingdom of Heaven? And have we not in view of all these interesting truths, exhorted you times without number, and conjured you by every solemn obligation that could be suggested,—by the everlasting glories of Heaven, and by the eternal torments of Hell to believe in Christ without delay, in order to the salvation of your immortal souls?—"We speak as to wise men, judge ye what we say."—1 Cor. 10. 15.

But as the making of this appeal may, to a superficial observer, appear to savor of pride, we must proceed to consider,

II. *The motives with which it was made.*

We may be well assured that St. Paul sought not to advance his own glory: no; he had higher ends in view; he endeavored to show the Elders of Ephesus,

A. *How much they were indebted to God for the privileges they had enjoyed.*

To have such a ministry of the word so long continued to them, was a greater blessing than to be loaded with all the temporal benefits that could have been bestowed upon them. By means of his Ministry, vast multitudes had been "turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God:" now therefore that they were about to be deprived of those blessings, it became them, not so much to grieve at the loss they were to sustain, as to adore God for the benefits they had enjoyed. In reviewing his labors amongst them for the space of three years, they would see how greatly they were indebted to God above other cities, which had enjoyed only a transient visit of a few days or weeks; and would feel themselves bound to render to the Lord, according to the benefits he had conferred upon them.

And in making our appeal, we hope we have been actuated by a similar motive. It is not, we trust, in a spirit of self-complacency and self-approbation that we have taken this hasty retrospective view of our past ministrations. For we know that we have often been remiss in our duty and deserved your censure; often by our short comings and offences furnished you occasions for the exercise of your patience and forgiving love toward us; and on the whole, we are sensible we have a great deal more cause for self-humiliation and self-loathing before God, than to compliment and commend ourselves.

Surely then, with such a view of our duty and such a conviction of our deficiency, pride and vanity, we hope, have had no share in dictating the appeal we have this day made. But we were anxious like the Apostle, to stir you up to gratitude for the distinguished privileges he has already vouchsafed to you.

If there be any foundation for our appeal, there ought you not so much to dwell on the approaching separation as to praise God for what he has already done. Few Lutheran congregations have been more highly favored than yours. For upwards of a half a century, you have enjoyed with scarcely any intermission all the advantages of a christian ministry. And it is worthy of remark, that some of the most devout and eminent divines of our church have been stationed among you; we need only mention the names of Young, Gœhring, Schmucker and Schæffer,* men "whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches," and who are

* It may be noticed perhaps as a singular coincidence, that of five Lutheran ministers located in Hagerstown, three continued their ministrations precisely sixteen years, viz: Mr. Young, Dr. Schmucker, and the Author. Mr. Gœhring returned to York, Pa. whence he had been called, after a residence of only one year; and Mr. Schæffer, after a faithful and laborious ministration of little more than four years, was called home by the Master to his eternal reward.

universally enumerated among the brightest ornaments of our Zion. Assuredly then, you should not murmur against God, nor censure him who considers himself bound, after so long and so laborious a performance of duty, to withdraw from among you; but you ought rather to cherish a grateful recollection of the marvellous mercy of God in times past, and try to profit by it. How has God prospered this congregation in latter years? how many hundreds have been added to your number? how large a proportion of the rising generation have become the hopeful subjects of renewing and saving grace? what a "season of refreshing" was granted us during last fall and winter, to the conversion of a large number of impenitent sinners, and the edification and encouragement of many believers in Christ? what harmony and unanimity prevail among you at this time? O verily, your hearts should swell with gratitude, and your mouths should be filled with praises; instead of being depressed you should individually adopt the language of the Psalmist: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:" *Ps.* 103. 1. 2. Thus you may hope that God will remember you for good hereafter; so far he has been gracious, let the past be regarded as a pledge of what he will achieve for you in future, if you are thankful, and make a wise improvement of the grace already conferred.

Another object of the Apostle in his appeal to the Elders of Ephesus, was to suggest to them,

B. How carefully they should guard against departing from the faith.

Notwithstanding all the instructions they had received, they might, and would, if left to themselves, depart from God. St. Paul knew, that, "after his departure, grievous wolves would enter in among them," and that even from among themselves men would arise, "speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Hence he reminded them of his own dispositions as a christian, of his unwearied labors in their behalf as a pastor, and of the fidelity with which he preached to them the doctrines of repentance and faith; in order that they might infer from all this, the necessity of guarding against any declension from what he had "shewed and taught them both publicly and from house to house."

With the same view we also have made our appeal. There is perhaps no season when members of a congregation are in greater danger of going or being led astray, than at the removal of a faithful minister, unless there be substituted in his place an Elisha, on whom the mantle of Elijah has fallen.† When Moses was on the Mount only 40 days, the people, even with Aaron at their head, departed from the Lord, and made a golden calf. What then must not be expected, where the bereavement is likely to be of longer continuance; and the people are left without any such distinguished saint to superintend and control them? It is true, you will not be left destitute; no, we thank God, that a beloved brother, "a guileless Nathaniel," a pastor after God's own heart, has kindly consented to break the bread of life to you occasionally until you can be properly supplied.‡ But his services, faithful as they doubtless will be, must necessarily be very limited, as he has another calling which will engross nearly the

* The Author added *twelve hundred and seventy three* individuals to the four congregations under his charge, two of which however, he has not attended to during the last five or six years.

†As the sentiment here expressed, is liable to misconstruction, the Author would observe, that he has no personal allusion to himself or others, but is speaking in general terms.

‡The Rev. Mr. Tioshour has engaged to preach one sermon to the congregation, every Lord's day.

whole of his time and attention. Hence we deem it important to urge you to future watchfulness. O how many temptations will beset your path and importune you to relapse from the faith and forget your God? how will the world and your heart solicit you to forsake the Saviour and disregard the interests of your immortal souls? how will "Satan desire to have you that he may sift you as wheat?" what means will be employed to draw you aside from your church, to induce you to forsake "the assembling of yourselves together" here in this house of God, and to relinquish "the profession of your faith?" It is known to you all, that there are not wanting those, who would be willing to aggrandize themselves by building up their own church upon the very ruins of ours, and then triumphantly rejoice and boast of the success that has attended their proselyting schemes, though our little Zion should writhe and bleed at every pore in consequence of the wounds inflicted upon her. And if such efforts are made when you have a pastor to watch over your interests, how much more when the absence of the Shepherd and the hope of impunity will invite the attack of the enemy?—Moreover, it is possible for a root of bitterness to spring up among yourselves and trouble you, whereby many may be defiled. Dissensions and discord may arise in your own midst, particularly if an opportunity should present itself to choose another pastor. In various other ways, the Congregation in general, and individual members in particular may be seriously injured. We would therefore beseech you all to "watch and remember that by the space of 16 years, we ceased not to warn you every one, night and day, with tears." Have we not served you with promptness whenever called on? have we not manifested the most tender compassion for your souls, and persevered year after year amidst toils, and hardships and oppositions which might have driven firmer men than us from the field of combat? have we not declared to you the whole counsel of God, keeping back nothing that was profitable? testifying both to hollow professors and hardened unbelievers, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ?—And shall all this have been in vain? will you now at last depart from the faith, forsake your church, or grow careless in the work of your salvation? O we hope not! we cannot endure the thought; we entreat you therefore again and again to be faithful, and to watch and pray without ceasing, lest you enter into temptation.

Finally, in making his appeal, the Apostle wished to intimate to them—

C. How earnestly they should strive to promote the interests of the Church—

These Elders are the same as in a subsequent verse are called "Overseers," or "Bishops;" and as their peculiar duty called them "to feed the church of God," he charged them "to take heed both to themselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost had placed them," even that church, which our incarnate "God had purchased with his own blood." What mighty considerations does he here urge, to stimulate them to a diligent discharge of their high office! O that every Minister felt their full influence, and were actuated by them in the whole of his conduct!

Our object in appealing to you this day, was also to excite you to zeal in promoting the welfare of your congregation. You must not suppose that it is the exclusive duty of ministers to labor for the prosperity of Zion, for every member of a church may do much towards the establishment of his Brethren in faith, and love, and holiness. All should watch over one another for good; and this duty is still more imperative, when a Pastor is removed, and scope is thereby afforded for the entrance of contentious persons to distract and divide the Church. We therefore exhort every one of you to perform his part in helping forward the cause of the congregation.

Let the Elders and Deacons remember that they owe it to their brethren who elected them to their present honorable stations, as well as to themselves, to labor faithfully for the church, and to lead the van in every good measure that may have a tendency to promote its temporal and spiritual prosperity. Let them who are not members of the council, bear in mind that they are bound to co-operate with them that are, in "every good word and work." Let the young men and women especially, love the gates of Zion, and account it an honor and a privilege to take a very active part in furthering her interests. This you may all do in a variety of ways, a few of which, we shall now in concluding, briefly suggest:—

1. *You must labor to preserve unity and peace—*

Our Saviour teaches us that "if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand, and if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand;" *Mark* 3. 24. 25. and we may also add that a congregation, distracted by divisions and involved in broils cannot flourish. There is therefore much sound truth in the German proverb: "Der Friede nährt, aber der Unfriede zehrt.*" Hence we find in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the following impressive exhortation on this subject: "I therefore (the prisoner of the Lord,) beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We entreat you to lay to heart this solemn admonition, and carefully avoid whatever might tend to interrupt the harmony and destroy the good feeling at present existing; and regarding each other as brethren in Christ, as children of the same Father, members of the same body, and recipients in prospect of the same eternal glories; let perfect love and friendship abound and reign triumphantly in every bosom.

Lo, what a pleasing sight,
Are brethren that agree!
How blest are all whose hearts unite
In bonds of piety!

2. *You must be diligent in the use of all the means of grace—*

You know that we have always insisted on this, for as the body without food must perish, so the soul without spiritual sustenance will soon languish and die unto God and vital religion. We exhort you therefore, to be zealous and constant in your attendance on all those means appointed of God for the preservation and promotion of the principle of spiritual life in the soul. Study the sacred pages, visit the sanctuary of the Lord, pray in your closets and with your families, commemorate the dying love of your Redeemer in the holy communion, attend the Wednesday evening Lecture, let your Sunday School, your Saturday night prayer-meetings, and the monthly meetings of the Church Council be continued with as much, and even more zeal than ever; and let that pious band of young brethren, who have so long been in the habit of meeting on Monday evening, by no means suffer that lovely little school of fraternal affection and christian piety to languish and fail,—may God's blessing rest upon it. Thus,

All in their stations move,
And each perform his part,
In every work of zeal and love,
With sympathizing heart.

Further, in order to advance the cause of the congregation—

3. *You must make adequate provision for your pastor.*

This is a subject which we have always felt reluctant to bring before

*In peace we flourish—in war we perish.

you, lest the consideration of it should prove injurious to religion, by giving color to the suspicion of mercenary motives. But now that we are taking leave of you, and cannot ourselves expect to derive any personal benefit from the discussion, we hope to escape the ungenerous imputation.

We observe then that in this respect our congregations in general are mournfully deficient, greatly to the discredit of Lutherans and to the injury of the cause of religion among us. Many of our ministers are compelled to take charge of 3, 4, 5, 6, and even more congregations in order to obtain a scanty subsistence! Instead of devoting much of their time to meditation and preparation for the pulpit, and to visiting from house to house for the good of souls; they must keep a horse and consume their time in riding to distant churches and preaching from four to seven and eight times a week, exposing themselves to "the peltings of the pitiless storm," and the most inclement weather, and frequently at hours and seasons when a man of common sensibility would shudder to think that his domestic animals were not under comfortable shelter. Thus their strength is soon prostrated, their spirits broken down, and nervous debility, gloomy melancholy, hepatic disorders and pulmonary affections, and other fearful maladies crowd upon their emaciated frame, until premature death relieves them from their hard servitude; and in addition to these accumulated cares and ills, it is not uncommon for them to be suffering under all the privations and distresses of poverty, and finally to leave a helpless and penniless family to the stinted pities of a merciless world! If this be not unjust and cruel, we are at a loss to know wherein these crimes consist.

Even the small stipend promised them, is sometimes not paid. How often do individuals when called upon for the small amount of their subscription, cavil, demur and refuse payment, and thus, meanly take advantage of that custom in our country, which forbids a resort to coercive measures for the collection of ministers salaries! Verily, we are at a loss to express our indignation in terms sufficiently strong against conduct so ineffably contemptible. When the ministers of Christ are witnesses to such despicable manœuvring, and yet further discover that the narrow pittance they do receive, is regarded by many, not as the partial payment of a just debt; which Christ claims for his faithful servants, and which cannot be withheld without robbery, but as a charitable donation, is it a wonder if they exclaim: "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place!"—We indignantly spurn for ourselves and for our brethren, the degrading idea that we are supported by charity. We are not clerical pensioners upon mere bounty. Our appeal is to JUSTICE; and if our claims are denied on this ground, we refuse to plead before any other tribunal, and refer the matter to the great assize!

Congregations who, to their deep, and wide and endless reproach thus reluctantly dole out such a wretched pittance from their affluence, deserve to be put upon abstinence for at least a twelvemonth, or until they are willing to support their pastor in comfort. They love their minister dearly with their lips, but hate him as cordially with their pockets. They keep him poor to keep him humble, forgetting that as humility is no less necessary for themselves than for him, this is an argument why the articles which minister to their pride, should be retrenched in order to support his comfort. It is curious to hear how some members will pray for their minister, and entreat God to bless him in his basket and his store, while alas! poor man, they have taken special care that his basket shall be empty, and his store nothingness.

The Scriptures are very explicit on this head, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Gall. 6.

6. Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?—even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.” 1 Cor. 9. 7—14. Moreover, ministers are required to devote themselves *exclusively* to the duties of their office, “Give thyself *wholly* to them.” 1 Tim. 4. 15. “No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life;” 2 Tim. 2. 4. and hence the necessity of their *living of the gospel* which they preach.

But we are perhaps dwelling too long on this part of the subject, particularly as there are not very many in this congregation to whom the foregoing remarks strictly apply. We rejoice to have it in our power to state, that while a few individuals stand charged with the delinquencies upon which we have been animadverting, yet, as a congregation, you have always faithfully performed your engagements with us, and this testimony we will cheerfully bear in your favor whenever it may be necessary. But let us entreat you to continue hereafter to make ample provision for your pastor. Always remember that he who devotes his life to assist you in obtaining an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away,—who, by his ministrations, soothes your cares, lightens your sorrows, mortifies your sins, throws a radiance over your darkest scenes, and gilds your brightest ones with additional splendor;—is well entitled to a *generous recompence*.

Once more, in your efforts to further the good cause—

4. *You must entertain a tender regard for your pastor's reputation.*

If a fair character is of value in the ordinary concerns of life, it is ten-fold more so in the holy exercises of the sanctuary; hence, a minister despoiled of his good name, is like Sampson shorn of his locks—a poor, feeble, faltering creature, the pity of his friends and the derision of his enemies. We by no means wish a bad minister screened, but would not have a good one maligned; and so long as he “walks worthy of his calling,” his congregation should preserve his reputation against the tongue of the slanderer with as much care, as they would his life against the hand of the assassin.

When we consider the restless malignity of the enemy of God and holiness, and add to this his subtlety and craft; when we consider what a multitude of unbelievers there are who are his vassals, and under his malign influence, creatures so destitute of moral principle, and so filled with venom against religion, as to be prepared to go any lengths in defaming the righteous, and especially gospel ministers, the only wonder is, that the character of christian pastors is not more frequently blasted by the poisonous breath of calumny. How tremblingly alive should you therefore be to the importance of defending your minister. You should neither expect to see him perfect, nor hunt after his imperfections—imperfections which after all may be consistent with not only real piety, but eminent piety—you should not take pleasure in either magnifying or looking at them; but make all reasonable excuse for them, and endeavor to lose sight of his infirmities in his virtues, as you do the spots of the sun amidst the radiance with which they are surrounded. Beware of whispers, innuendoes, significant shrugs and nods, and especially of that *slanderous silence*, which is often more defamatory than the broadest accusations;* and let every one learn *by heart and in heart*, Luther's admirable explanation of the 8th commandment:

*For some of the sentiments contained in this and the preceding paragraph, we acknowledge ourselves indebted to Mr. James, of Birmingham, England; and as those who were present at the delivery of this Sermon, will not recollect having heard these two paragraphs, we have to observe, that we had them prepared and intended to deliver them, but for want of time were obliged to omit them.

"THAT WE SHOULD SO FEAR AND LOVE GOD, AS NOT TO BELIE, BETRAY, SLANDER OR RAISE INJURIOUS REPORTS AGAINST OUR NEIGHBOR; BUT APOLOGIZE FOR HIM, SPEAK WELL OF HIM, AND PUT THE MOST CHARITABLE CONSTRUCTION ON ALL HIS ACTIONS."

In conclusion, we leave our blessing upon you all, both collectively as a congregation, and singly as individuals. Venerable men and women, (for whom we have no other feeling but that of respect and affection) whose locks, blanched by the frost of time, and green old age, announce the sober stillness of a declining sun, accept for yourselves our devout prayer: "O God thou hast taught them from their youth, now also when they are old and gray-headed, O God forsake them not:" *Psal.* 71. 17, 18. "being found in the way of righteousness, may their hoary heads be crowns of glory." To the middle aged, we would address the words of the Saviour: "You must work the works of him that sent you, while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work." *Joh.* 9. 4. And you, my young brethren—*all*—especially those of you whom it was our privilege to instruct and confirm—*my own beloved band*, whom my heart must ever hold in most endeared remembrance;—receive once more a word of counsel which we give in the language of David to his son Solomon: "And thou, my son; (and thou, my daughter,) know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever." *1 Chron.* 28. 9. O may the roses of your youth acquire their loveliest tinge when your hearts beat highest in the service of the God of your fathers! And may those roses be resuscitated to bloom in yet lovelier and immortal dies, in the day, when that God shall summon you to rise and take your station in his eternal kingdom;—IN THAT DAY—beloved band!—*may not one of you be LACKING!* Our parting admonition to IMPENITENT SINNERS, is: "Except ye be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of God." *Joh.* 3. 3. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." *Eph.* 5. 14.—to MOURNERS: "Look unto Jesus, and be ye saved, for he is God, and there is none else." *Isa.* 45. 22.—to BACKSLIDERS: "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works." *Rev.* 2. 5.—to BELIEVERS: "Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset you, and run with patience the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of your faith." *Heb.* 12. 1, 2.

To all our friends who stood by us through *evil* as well as good report, whose tender sympathies so often soothed our troubled feelings and solaced our aching heart, when dark and dismal scenes crowded around us; and whose warm attachment has remained uninterrupted until this day; we tender the most ardent thanks of an ardent heart—may the Lord reward them according to their numerous kindnesses and the abundance of his own mercy. All who have ever done us any injury whatever, we now, as we have done before, in the presence of God, cheerfully and cordially forgive, praying that the Lord may also pardon them, and hoping that they and all others may exercise toward us the same charitable disposition, and that we may all hereafter meet "before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in our hands," mingling our joyous voices in the harmonious and universal acclaim of "SALVATION TO OUR GOD WHICH SITTETH UPON THE THRONE, AND UNTO THE LAMB."

"And now, brethren, we commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." AMEN.

